

MADISON COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

by Steve DiGiovanna

Serving the public and the 5 branches of local government - Law Enforcement, Fire, Emergency Medical Service, Public Works, Administration



"the single biggest problem in communications is the illusion that it has taken place"

Sheridan Fire Department Training Burn

County's IMT personnel deployed for 1st time



The Sheridan Fire Department, under the command of Fire Chief Ted Woirhaye, sponsored a training fire on Sunday April 13th. The event was held on a 70 degree, clear and calm spring day. The fires on Carey Lane began at about 10AM and were finished by 2:30 PM.

Fire Departments from Twin Bridges and Virginia City sent personnel and equipment to the training. Additionally, the county's Incident Management Team (IMT) and Ruby Valley Ambulance also sent crews to assist and stand-by. "The training went off without a hitch and was valuable for new firefighters from the local fire departments, as well as a huge benefit for the newly formed IMT" said Chris Mumme, Director of Emergency Services.

Over 32 first responders from the Ruby Valley side of the county took part in the training. The "Instructor in Charge" was Asst. Chief Don Bair. Safety Officer op's were overseen by FF Jake Barnosky. Assistant Chief Brian Verhow was the Operations Chief.

Virginia City F.D. - with Fire Chief Roger Williams on board, sent their CAF Unit (Compressed Air Foam Unit) and a very large and helpful Water Tender.

Twin Bridges Fire (under the direction of Fire Captain Brendan Dale) sent a brush unit and a structure engine.



Popular Dispatcher Retires

After nearly 20 years with the County Sheriff's Office, Communications Officer Casey Baril has decided to call it quits.

Recently, Casey has been hampered by care concerns for her daughter and important family needs. Casey began her department career on March 31st, 1988 - and retired from the department on March 15th, 2008.

Casey, known for her calm and cool radio presence - and competency with office duties, came from a law enforcement background in the Vallejo / Martinez area of California.

Janet Fortner, Communications Center Supervisor said, "for me as a supervisor, I will sorely miss her experience, dedication and quick wit - and her laughter and caring for the well being of others."

Casey has said she will miss the public, the people she worked with, the "excitement" and the satisfaction of a job well done. We will miss her as well.

Madison County Fire Chiefs Council

On April 9th, the first Madison County Fire Chief Council convened at the Courthouse in Virginia City. The meeting was held in the Jury Room and was facilitated by the department of DES / Communications (Chris Mumme and Steve DiGiovanna).

All seven of the county fire agencies were well represented at this gathering.

Those in attendance included:

Twin Bridges Fire	Chief Lloyd Carlson and Captain Brendan Dale
Sheridan Fire	Chief Ted Woirhaye
Alder Fire	Chief Dan Doornbos and Asst. Chief Steve Gilman
Virginia City Fire	Chief Roger Williams and Asst. Chief Robert Erdall
Madison Valley Rural Fire	Chief Shawn Christiansen
Harrison Fire	Chief Joe Husar and Asst Chief John Armstrong
Yellowstone Club FD	Chief Steve Hauck and Captain Jesse Thrush
Sheriff Office / IMT representative	Captain Steve Orr
DES 1	Chris Mumme
DES 2	Steve DiGiovanna

Agenda Topics included:

- a. Fire Department boundary adjustments and assigning fire protection to undesignated areas
- b. Mobile Command Unit trailer availability and the use of the newly formed IMT group
- c. Spring run off and local flooding preparation and ideas
- d. Upcoming live burn training in Sheridan on April 13th
- e. DES 1 and DES 2 operations, DES / Communications - county emergency response coordination responsibilities and training
- f. Communications – new IM towers, new dispatchers, frequencies and county numbering considerations
- g. Fire Dept. specialized equipment availability and department capabilities

Open Discussion

Alder Assistant Fire Chief Steve Gilman pointed out that the local fire departments are having difficulty recruiting and retaining firefighters. DES 1 Chris Mumme agreed to work on this issue through the DES office.

Madison Valley Rural Chief Shawn Christiansen noted that due to fire service responsibilities and job hazards, the firefighters are more like “unpaid professionals” rather than an occasional gathering of community volunteers.

DES 2 Steve DiGiovanna mentioned that a partial answer / quick fix to the dilemma of decreased firefighter response is the need to request mutual aid sooner for significant or “working incidents” – and additional reliance on your neighboring department for resources and help.

There was general discussionary agreement related to the need and desire to have the Fire Chief meetings on a quarterly basis - with the possibility of multi-agency exercises and drills being conducted as well. Future meetings will be facilitated through the DES office.

Yellowstone Chief Steve Hauck discussed a willingness by his department to participate more often in county functions and responses.

The Communication Department will facilitate a County Fire Department newsletter to include information about significant responses, new equipment, training options and general fire suppression information. This newsletter can then be distributed to all fire agencies and firefighters via electronic mail.